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The guide offers practical information on various aspects of daily living in France, including: money; food; restaurants; hotels; postal and telecommunications services; transportation; shopping; health and medical care; safety and security; tipping; electricity; measurement and clothing size conversions; greetings and leave-takings; names, titles, and forms of address; conversational topics and style; invitations; privacy; personal appearance; time; meals; family life; daily life; leisure activities; cafes; and national pride. Suggestions for appropriate behavior and expectations are offered. It also includes basic information about France: a historical sketch; maps; geography and people; government; economy; education; religion; and art. A final chapter addresses use of the French language, and includes basic grammar facts and some useful expressions. A brief bibliography lists additional books about France. (MSE)

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LIVING IN FRANCE



by Anni Hawkinson
and Patrick R. Moran

◀ 1994 Revised Edition ▶

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FIRST STEPS

Congratulations! You are about to embark upon an adventure—living in another country. Your destination is France. When you arrive, you will need to be able to satisfy some immediate survival needs. Often you will find that you must do things differently from how you do them at home. This section is designed to help you get started learning how to live in France. Although every town will be a little different, we can provide you with basic facts about life in France. Filling in the details will be up to you. So, for instance, while we can tell you about restaurants and eating habits in France, you will need to find places to eat which have food you like and can afford. And while we can tell you about different means of transportation existing in France, you will still need to find the best way to get around the town where you live. We can suggest alternatives, but you will be making the final choices.

One final note: You may find that cultural changes, technological advances, and regional differences affect customs, values, systems, and even the “country facts” as reported in this booklet. So “expect the unexpected” and be prepared to learn as well from your own direct experience. The information in this section and those which follow should be used only as an initial guide. *Bonne chance!*

This section covers the topics listed below. Read the ones of most interest to you now; then read the others as the need arises.

1. Money
2. Food
3. Restaurants
4. Hotels
5. Telephone
6. Transportation
7. Letters and Telegrams
8. Shopping
9. Health and Medical Care
10. Security
11. Tipping
12. Electricity
13. Conversions

1. Money

The *franc* is the monetary unit used in France. Its value changes according to the world money market, so you must check the current exchange rate before you leave for France.

French *francs* are based on a decimal system, so that one *franc* contains 100 *centimes*. French money comes in the following denominations: 5, 10, and 20 *centime* coins; $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2, 5 and 10 *franc* coins; and 10, 50, 100, and 500 *franc* banknotes.

Le nouveau franc ("new franc"), abbreviated *F*, has been used in France since 1960, but many people still designate prices of things in terms of *anciens francs* when speaking. One *nouveau franc* equals 100 *anciens francs*. Thus it is important to be able to recognize whether a price is being cited in old or new *francs*. In shops, *cafés* and restaurants, written prices must always be in *nouveaux francs*.

Banks are open in France from 9:00 to noon and 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Exchange offices are open in the *Gare de Lyon* and at the *Invalides* air terminal in Paris on Saturdays, Sundays and in the evening. Usually there are offices for exchanging money at the larger train stations, airports and air terminals. Hotels will also change money, but the exchange rate will not be as high as a bank will give you because the hotel charges a fee for providing the service. Similarly, while you can use travelers' checks when you make purchases in the large department stores, the rate will not be as good as at a bank. If you find yourself short of cash, a good rule of thumb is to exchange only small sums of money at shops, hotels, or restaurants, and to change larger sums at banks during their regular hours. Automatic teller machines are now available in many French airports, stations, hotels, and banks. These are a very convenient and safe way of getting cash. Contact your U.S. bank before leaving home to find out which ATM systems you can use in France and what limits and charges may apply.

2. Food

France is well-known for the variety and quality of its food, and you will have the opportunity to taste many things you may

FIRST STEPS

not have had before. A typical French meal consists of several dishes served one after another, rather than all at the same time. First there is an *hors d'oeuvre*, then an *entrée*, followed by a meat and a vegetable, which may be served separately. The meal is usually completed with salad, cheese and/or dessert, and coffee.

Hors d'oeuvres vary from an assortment of raw vegetables to fruits such as melons and tomatoes, to fish such as sardines in oil, smoked salmon, or shellfish. It is usual to have an *hors d'oeuvre* at the noon meal and a soup at the evening meal.

Entrées also vary, and it is here that you may taste new foods—frogs' legs, pigs' feet, snails, and tripe, to name but a few. Freshwater and marine fish of all types are also served, as are egg dishes such as omelettes. This course is sometimes omitted, since the meal is quite complete without it.

Meat may be served broiled, grilled, roasted, or in a sauce. Beef, lamb, pork, and poultry are all common, as are certain game animals. Some meats which may be new possibilities for you are goose, guinea-fowl, pigeon, pheasant, rabbit, veal, and horse meat.

Common vegetables are potatoes, green or white (dry) beans, peas, spinach, cauliflower, zucchini, and eggplant. Noodles may be served instead of potatoes.

Typical desserts include fruit, ice cream, pastries, and certain special dishes such as sweet *soufflés* and chocolate *mousse*.

France is famous for both its wines and its cheeses, and different regions have their own specialities. Try to sample what is made in the region where you live. There are more than 100 types of cheese in France, and over 300 different varieties of them. Some, like *Roquefort* and *Camembert*, are known the world over. Cheese is almost always enjoyed with red wine and bread.

Bread is an integral part of all meals in France. It is eaten with almost all parts of the meal (except dessert). A meal without bread is inconceivable for most French people.

3. Restaurants

While meals in French restaurants are often expensive, they are usually quite delicious. You have the choice of ordering a set menu—usually consisting of two or three courses followed by cheese, dessert and coffee—or ordering *à la carte*. It is usually a better buy to order the set menu, and these are almost always posted outside the restaurant with their prices so you can see what you are spending before you go in. Ordering the set menu is also a good way to get acquainted with French dishes you might not otherwise have thought to try.

A few things you might want to know about French restaurants are described here. First of all, you will be considered odd if you order just one dish; if you do so for reasons of economy, you may find that you are being charged the same price for a main dish as you would be for a starter plus a main dish. This, of course, is not true in smaller eating places such as *cafés* and snackbars. Also, it is not acceptable to have soft drinks with a meal in a restaurant.

The best food is not necessarily found in the fancier-looking restaurants. The French are more interested in what happens in the kitchen than in how comfortable the dining area is. The least expensive places to eat are *bistrots* and *cafés*, which are often family-run. *Brasseries* are *café*-restaurants which are often large and noisy, with good, simple cooking.

Bread comes with the meal but it is not served with butter. Water is not automatically served in French restaurants. You may ask for it, but be prepared for the fact that it is not usually served with ice. It is easiest to order bottle water, and both carbonated (*eau gazeuse*) and non-carbonated varieties are available. If you want plain tap water, you will need to ask for it by saying *l'eau plate*.

Tips for service are almost always included in the bill for your meal or snack in France. If you like the service, however, it is customary to leave a small tip for the waiter, up to half of the service charge on your bill.

If you would like to know about meal customs, read section 9 in the section Customs and Values.

4. Hotels

Most hotels are required by French law to post the price of each room on its wall and to charge no more than the posted rate, which is set by the government. This does not apply to deluxe hotels, where prices are not subject to government control. In some hotels, the posted prices do not include the service charge or taxes; together these charges can increase your bill by 25%. The letters *TTC*—*toutes taxes comprises* (inclusive of all forms of tax)—are used in many places. If you do not see them, you would be wise to ask what the additional charges are before you decide whether to stay at a particular hotel.



Breakfast is included in the price of the room at many French hotels. The breakfast is continental in style, consisting of black coffee or *café au lait*, hot chocolate, or tea with rolls, butter, and jam. If breakfast is not available at the hotel, you will always be able to get it in a nearby *bistrot* or *café*.

It is possible to stay in reasonably inexpensive *pensions* in France which cater to teachers and students. In these, the price for some or all of your meals is included in the room cost, and if you miss a meal it is your loss, not the *pension* owner's. In many *pensions* there is a minimum-stay period; you may not be able to stay for only a single night.

Two other possible types of accommodation can be investigated through the *Fédération Nationale des Logis et Auberges de France* (dwellings and inns of France), 25 rue Jean Mermoz, 75008 Paris, which offers information about staying in small hotels and modest rural inns, and through the *Fédération Nationale des Gîtes Ruraux de France* (humble rural dwellings of France), 34 rue Godot de Mauroy, 75009 Paris, which provides information about bed-and-breakfast lodgings throughout rural France. Many of these bed-and-breakfast accommodations are with families, so this source represents an opportunity to see France in a more personal way.

5. Telephone

The telephone system in France is very modern and efficient. It is operated by the State as part of the postal system, *Poste, Télégraphe, Téléphone (PTT)*. The modernization of the French telephone system was made a national priority in the 1970's, and the results are in place today. One such innovation is the *minitel*, a small computer attached to private telephones, which allows subscribers to carry out all sorts of transactions from their homes, from reserving train tickets or reviewing entertainment schedules to electronic mail correspondence.

Public telephones operate in three ways: by card, by coin, and by token. The cards, *télécartes*, are similar to plastic credit cards, and you can buy them at post offices, railway stations, and some *tabacs*. The card contains 50 or 120 magnetically imprinted units, and when you have used up these units through local or long distance telephone calls, you can renew your card. To make a call with this card, you insert it into the slot on the telephone, and dial your number. A small screen shows you how many units you have used for your call. Public telephones that require *télécartes* are very common, and in large cities, it is sometimes difficult to find a public telephone that operates on coins.

The coin-operated public phones use coin denominations of 1, 2, 5 and 10 *francs* and also 50 *centimes*. These telephones often require that you push a button to engage the call once the call has been answered. Be sure to read the instructions on the machine before you make the call.

Token-operated telephones are rare, although you may come across one in a *café* or *bistrot*. These telephones are used for local calls, and you need to buy a token [*jeton*] at the counter. Tokens also used to be sold at the *PTT*.

The *PTT* is another place to make a telephone call. Go to the appropriate counter, and the clerk will signal you which booth to enter. After you make the call, you pay at the counter. In some cases the clerk may dial the number for you.

6. Transportation

France has one of the world's most progressive railway systems. The SNCF (*Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français*) is owned and operated by the State. The entire system has been modernized, and the majority of lines use electric trains. It is possible to travel to any part of France from Paris without making it an overnight journey.

The fastest trains, called TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*), only go between certain cities, and they can reach speeds of 378 kms (236 miles) per hour. If you travel on them during peak hours, you will have to pay a surcharge; otherwise you pay the regular fare. Trains are distinguished according to whether they make no stops between departure point and destination (*les rapides*), stop only at large cities (*les express*), or stop at all towns (*les omnibus*). Some *express* trains also require a surcharge which should be obtained at the ticket counter before boarding the train.

SNCF has also established special reductions if you travel at certain times during the day. The reductions are available if you travel any time except from 3 p.m. Friday to noon Saturday, and 3 p.m. Sunday to noon Monday, plus a few public holidays and certain summer holiday departure and return dates. Be sure to investigate the types of reductions available if you are planning to travel.

It is important to know that you **must** get your ticket (and surcharge card, if required) punched in the orange machines at the station before you depart. If you do not, you can be fined. There are signs on these machines telling you to do so: *Composez votre billet*. To punch your ticket, put it in the machine where marked and move it slightly to the left until you hear a click.

Taxis can be found in cities throughout France. Radio-equipped ones are available and will usually arrive to pick you up precisely at the time they promise if you call them in. When hailing a taxi in town, don't be surprised if the driver of an empty cab gestures at you without stopping—she or he may simply be indicating that she or he is going home for a meal or has finished for the day. Taxi fares are not cheap, and a 15% tip above the meter reading is obligatory. Rates are usually posted inside the vehicle. It is important to be aware that rates increase about 20% from 10 p.m. to 6:30 a.m.

The *métro* in Paris is rapid and efficient. There are many lines covering every area of the city and connecting with one another at certain stations. They are identified by the names of the stations at their terminal points. When changing from one line to another, all you need to do is follow the name of the terminal point of the line in the direction you are traveling. So, for instance, if you are changing onto the Vincennes-Neuilly line (the line connecting these two terminal points), and you are headed in the direction of Neuilly, follow the signs that say Neuilly, not the signs that say Vincennes.

You can save money on *métro* tickets if you buy a pack of 10 tickets (*carnet*) at a rate which is lower than purchasing them individually. Anyone can use them, so if you are in a group, you can buy one *carnet* and split up the tickets. Even better than *carnets* are the *cartes touristiques* which allow you to use the *métro* an unlimited number of times during a period of 2, 4 or 7 days. In addition to the city lines, several new express subway lines have been built connecting Paris to the suburbs. The express network is called R.E.R. (*Réseau Express Régional*); you will need to buy a supplemental ticket to use these lines if you are traveling outside of Paris. The *metro* runs from 5:15 a.m. in the morning until 1 a.m. in the evening. The last *métro*, however, leaves the station at one extremity of the line at an hour necessary for it to arrive at the other end at 1 a.m. Therefore, not all stations are open until 1 a.m.

Buses operate in all French cities and between cities and towns. Different routes are identified by number, and at each bus stop there are signs which show the number of the buses stopping there. In Paris, bus and *métro* tickets are interchangeable. Like *métro* tickets, bus tickets are sold individually or in 10-ticket *carnets*. Buses run from 6:30 a.m. until around 9 p.m. at night.

7. Letters and Telegrams

Mail service through the PTT is excellent. Stamps can be purchased at post offices and *tabacs*. Telegrams can be sent from a post office, and every major city has at least one location open 24 hours a day. Fax machines are widely available.

8. Shopping



Shopping in France is an adventure. While prices may not be particularly low, the quality of what you buy is excellent. Shopkeepers also care about the beauty of how their products are displayed as well as about the quality. Different items are sold in individual shops specializing in one particular thing. So fish is sold in a *poissonnerie*, bread in a *boulangerie*, meat (pork, beef, lamb, poultry) at the *boucherie*, horsemeat at the *boucherie chevaline*, sausage and other prepared meats at the *charcuterie*, vegetables at the *marchand de légumes*, etc. The *épicerie* is the grocery store, and usually serves as the *crèmerie* and *laiterie* where milk, cream, and dairy products are sold. Larger markets selling a combination of products are common in France and are called *supermarchés*.

Traditionally, French people do their food shopping on a daily basis, and in many families today this tradition continues. This makes it possible to have fresh bread, milk, meat, and vegetables every day. You will need to bag your selections, and most people take baskets or *filets* (string bags) to carry their purchases home.

Shops in France are often closed from 12 to 2 p.m. daily (except certain department stores), and some small neighborhood grocery stores may be closed from 1 until 4 p.m. and then stay open later into the evening. Shops are closed two days a week, usually on Sundays and Mondays.

For other types of purchases, department stores afford a lot of variety and competitive prices. Some of the best-known chains are: *Au Printemps*, *Galeries Lafayette*, *Au Bon Marché*, *Trois Quartiers*, *Samaritaine*. Sales are often held in January and during the last weeks of June and July.

9. Health and Medical Care

Water is safe to drink in most of France unless it is marked *non-potable*. In fact, France is known for its spring waters, some of which are helpful for specific illnesses or medical conditions. Bottled water is available everywhere and is commonly used by everyone. Some varieties are carbonated. Pasteurized milk is available and safe; however, since all milk is not pasteurized, you should check to make sure when you order any, particularly in smaller farm towns.

The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers, Inc. (IAMAT) is a useful source of information for locating approved English-speaking doctors. Membership in the organization is free, and prices for visits to a doctor are set. France has 29 member hospitals and clinics. For information in the United States, you can write to IAMAT, 736 Center Street, Lewiston, NY 14092.

10. Security

Pickpockets are skilled in the larger cities in France. They can quickly identify foreign visitors who are easy targets, so it is important to remember to carry your purse or bag firmly and to keep an eye on your belongings in airports and train stations. The Paris *métro* is a favorite haunt of pickpockets, and they often work in pairs where one "accidentally" knocks against you while the other opens your bag or purse to remove your wallet. They do not even need to take the whole bag!

Be sure not to carry all your cash, traveler's checks, and passport with you when you go out into a large city, and put what you are carrying in different compartments in your purse or carrying bag. Leave what you don't need in the manager's safe if you are staying in a hotel.



11. Tipping

In France, service charges are included in your hotel bill but are listed separately on your restaurant checks. To make sure they are included, check for *service compris*. If you are not certain, be sure to ask. If service is included, you are not obliged to leave any additional tip, but it is common to leave a little extra, particularly in more expensive restaurants.

In hotels, the service charge covers everyone except the baggage porter, who will expect a small tip, and the *conciierge* (hotel porter), whose tip will vary depending on the length of your stay and the amount of special services you demand of him or her. If you stay for more than several days, you should tip the person who has cleaned your room, particularly if you asked him or her to do anything special for you.

At *cafés* and bars, the tip should be 12-15% if it is not included in the bill. Train porters get a fixed fee which is indicated on a metal tag on their overalls. In theaters, movie houses and at sports events, you are expected to tip the people who show you to your seat. Check with one of your French hosts about the appropriate amount. Information about tipping in taxis is given in section 6 on Transportation.

12. Electricity

There are no 110-volt electrical outlets in France. All outlets are for 220-volt appliances. Outlets have holes for three round prongs. You can buy adapters to attach to your appliance plugs when traveling.



13. Conversions

In Europe sizes and measures differ from those used in the United States. The following charts are provided to help you make the necessary conversions if you are not already acquainted with the European system.

Measurements **Weights and Linear**

Metric	U.S.
1 gram (g)	0.035 ounce
454 grams	1 pound
1 kilogram ("kilo")	2.2 pounds
1 centimeter (cm)	0.3937 inch
2.54 centimeters	1 inch
1 meter (m)	3.280 feet
1609.3 meters	1 mile

Liquid Measure

1 liter (l)	2.113 pints
1 liter	1.056 quarts
3.785 liter	1 gallon

Dry Measure

1 liter	0.908 quart
1 dekaliter (10 l)	1.135 pecks
1 hectoliter (100 l)	2.837 bushels

Kitchen Equivalents

Metric	U.S.
200 grams	1 cup sugar
150 g	1 cup flour
5 g	1 tsp.
12 g	1 tbsp.

Kilometers and Miles

1 km	0.6 mile	25 km	15.5 mile
3	1.8	35	21.7
5	3.1	50	31.0
8	4.9	100	62.1
10	6.2	200	124.2
15	9.3	300	186.4
20	12.4	500	310.6

Thermometer Readings*

38°C	100.4°F	0°C	32°F
35°	95°	-5°	23°
30°	86°	-10°	14°
25°	77°	-15°	5°
20°	68°	-17.77°	0°
10°	50°	-25°	-13°
5°	41°	-30°	-22°

*European thermometers use the centigrade scale. To convert Fahrenheit to centigrade, subtract 32, then multiply by 5 and divide by 9. To convert centigrade to Fahrenheit, multiply by 9, divide by 5 and add 32. The chart above gives an approximate conversion. 21°F-69.8°F

If you don't have a calculator handy or the time for long-hand calculations, this very rough rule of thumb will give you the approximate Fahrenheit equivalent of centigrade temperatures: the centigrade temperature times two plus 30 equals the approximate Fahrenheit, or $C^{\circ} \times 2 + 30 = F^{\circ}$ (approx.).

Clothing Sizes

Skirts, Dresses, Coats:

Blouses:

Europe

U.S.

Europe

U.S.

38

10

38

30

40

12

40

32

42

14

42

34

44

16

44

36

46

18

46

38

48

20

48

40

Shirts:

Shoes:

Europe

U.S.

Europe

U.S.

36

14

37

6

37

14½

38

7

38

15

39

8

39

15½

40

9

41

16

41

10

42

16½

42

11

43

17

43

12

CUSTOMS AND VALUES

Now that you have a handle on basic facts about where to find what you need and how to get it, you will want to begin looking more closely at how people live in France. Since French people are to be your new friends and family, it is important to understand their customs and values so you can fit into their world successfully. The topics in this section have been chosen to help you begin your study of French customs and values. Again, it will be up to you to learn the specifics about the people with whom you live and interact. The information we give you here is only a place for you to start. This is the beginning of your cultural exploration; it will be up to you to complete it.

The Following topics are covered in this section:

1. Greetings and Leave-takings
2. Names and Titles
3. Familiar Forms of Address
4. Conversational Topics and Style
5. Invitations
6. Privacy
7. Personal Appearance
8. Time
9. Meals
10. Family
11. Daily Life
12. Leisure
13. Cafés
14. National Pride



1. Greetings and Leave-takings



Social encounters in France have very clear beginnings and ends. Hand shakes and kisses on the cheeks (*la bise*) are the most common forms of greeting and taking leave. The handshake, used even among close friends, consists of a single shake with a slight pressure on the grip. Women should offer their hands to men, not vice versa. People usually shake hands whenever they meet one another, even if they have only just seen each other a few hours before. They also shake hands when saying goodbye to one another.

Kissing on the cheeks is the appropriate way to greet close friends and family. Different families and friends have different customs concerning the number of kisses: some greet with two kisses, one on each cheek; others greet with three kisses, on alternating cheeks; still others greet with four kisses, also on alternating cheeks. As you become more familiar with people you will become accustomed to the number of kisses they expect.

When meeting people for the first time, French people are usually reserved. Personal questions about someone's family or way of life are not considered to be polite, so keep your conversation general at first.

When you enter a store in France, it is customary to greet whomever you are dealing with, and others in the shop, before you state what you need. When you leave, say goodbye. Appropriate expressions are *Bonjour, messieurs*, or *Au revoir, messieurs*. Of course, *Au revoir, mesdames* or *messieurs-dames* may be called for if you are addressing either women or men and women.

2. Names and Titles

Titles are an important part of social interactions, as they help the French identify and maintain roles and distances in relationships.

The French use the titles *Monsieur* (Mr.), *Madame* (Mrs.), and *Mademoiselle* (Miss) frequently in their conversation. When one of these is used to refer to you by someone talking to you, it indicates courtesy and an interest in your being involved in the conversation. *Mademoiselle* is generally used for young women or servants; otherwise *Madame* is considered to be more polite.

First names are used once people get to know each other. If you use them too early, you may be seen as "pushy" or "rude." You should wait and let your French acquaintances let you know when it is appropriate to begin using first names.



3. Forms of Address

In French there are two forms for addressing another person: *tu* and *vous*. The use of these forms is important, because they are signs of the relationship between the person you are talking to and you. The French are sensitive to the distinction between *tu* and *vous* and using them appropriately can help you get along with French people.

When you use *tu*, this signals a closer, friendlier, or informal relationship, while the use of *vous* indicates a formal, more distant relationship. There are no simple formulas for the use of these forms, but a useful rule of thumb is to use *tu* with family, friends, children, and fellow students, and to use *vous* with other people in other situations. To move from *tu* and *vous* in a relationship, take your cues from the French person, who may make this shift during a conversation with you, or may openly suggest using *tu*. You can also ask if you can use *tu* (*On peut se tutoyer?*).

4. Conversation: Topics and Styles

Conversations are the glue that holds relationships together for the French. To an observer, a French conversation might seem like an argument, with people constantly interrupting or talking at the same time, attacking one another, with animated gestures, loud voices, and even laughter. What makes this a conversation instead of an argument is that the French enjoy challenging one another's views and opinions, stating and explaining their views. They readily express their disagreement and expect others to do the same. Criticism is also expected and even welcomed. The French appreciate logical arguments, eloquence, wit, and humor. How you say something is just as important as what you say. By accepting their views on conversation, you may find it easier to build relationships with the French through conversation.

The French are willing to talk about almost any topic, but there are topics that they might consider too personal or intimate for some conversations. Take your cues for appropriate topics from the people in the conversation.

5. Invitations

You should arrive on time in France when you have been invited for a meal. For a party, some delay in arrival is acceptable, up to a half an hour after the stated time.

When you arrive, you should wait for the host or hostess to invite you inside. Usually he or she will help you with your coat and show you where to go or where to sit. It is polite to bring a gift of flowers (other than roses or chrysanthemums) or candy. When refreshments are being served, it is polite to stand up to take what is being offered. When seated, you should sit with your legs together or crossed; do not put your feet up on chairs or low tables.

When ending a visit, you should wait for a moment in silence before actually getting up to leave. It is of course important to thank your host and/or hostess and thank-you notes are frequently sent the day after more formal gatherings. One should also shake hands with everyone at the party before leaving.

6. Privacy

The French respect their privacy. They prefer not to discuss personal matters with people who are not close friends or family. You should telephone if you want to visit someone; "dropping in" without warning is not appropriate. Doors in offices are usually kept closed, and you should knock before you enter an office or a room in a home where the door is closed if you know that someone is inside.

7. Personal Appearance

Historically, clothing and one's personal appearance have always been important for the French. One's choice of clothing is a sign of individual style and the French are very conscious of how they and others look. Whether a peasant or a prince, a punk-rock star or an international business executive, the French take their appearance seriously and, to most Americans, seem chic and slightly formal.

8. Time

Time is designated according to two systems in France. In official schedules, the 24-hour clock is used, where 01:00 means 1:00 a.m. and the hours are counted up consecutively to 24:00 (midnight). 13:00 means 1:00 p.m. The 12-hour clock is also used, and this system may be used in conversation instead of the 24-hour one. Be sure to clarify which system is being used when you make an appointment. For example, if someone says *8 heures* and you are not sure what system she or he is using, you can easily clarify by asking *du soir?* (In the evening?) or *du matin?* (In the morning?). It could be either if the speaker is using a 12-hour system; it could only be in the morning if she or he is using the 24-hour system.

Punctuality is valued in France, although the time one is expected to arrive varies with the event. For any official appointments, you will be expected to arrive on time. This is also true for meetings with friends if you are getting together at a specific location to do something or go somewhere else. If you are meeting at a *café* to relax and enjoy yourselves, prompt arrival at the time specified is less expected. (See section 5 on Invitations.)

9. Meals

Meals in France are social events to be savored and enjoyed, and the French tend to spend longer at meals than you might expect. The only exception to this is breakfast. Traditionally, the main meal was eaten at noon during a two- to three-hour break. Customs are now changing in the larger cities, and the main meal is in the evening for many families. Still, the traditional noon meal is important and may be served on the weekend if not during the week.



In France, both hands should be visible on the table when seated for a meal. This is done by resting your forearms on the edge of the table when you are not actually eating. It is considered impolite to put your elbows on the table. When eating, the fork is held in the left hand and the knife is held in the right. The fork is held upside-down, and the knife remains in the right hand even when you are not using it to cut something. The left hand is used to manipulate the fork for eating so the knife can remain in the right hand at all times. Those of you who are used to using your right hand for eating with a fork may need some practice at eating in this manner. The end of the knife and fork should be balanced on the edge of the plate when they are not in use. They should then be laid across the plate when you are finished eating.

It is also considered impolite to talk with food in your mouth, and to drink from your glass without having first wiped your mouth, with a napkin.

Bread is served with all meals in France and pieces should be broken with the fingers rather than cut with a knife. Similarly, lettuce in salads, which is usually served in large pieces that cannot be easily fit into your mouth, should be folded with the fork and knife and never cut.

10. Family

The French family is very close-knit, and family loyalties are important. Family members spend a lot of time together, and attendance at family gatherings—e.g., weddings, baptisms, etc.—is expected of everyone. The extended family can be quite large, and it is not uncommon to find grandparents living with their children and grandchildren. Young French people are in general very respectful of their adult relatives, often spending as much time with them as they do with peers, although this is beginning to change. While the father of a French family plays a dominant role, it is the mother who usually runs the household. Family life is private, and when someone outside the family is invited home, it is usually an important sign of acceptance and friendship.

11. Daily Life

The average working day in France begins between 8 and 9 o'clock. Traditionally, there is a two- to three-hour break at noon for lunch. In this case, the working day ends between 6 and 7, and dinner is served around 8 p.m. or later. Parents often take their children to school on their way to work. Non-working mothers do the daily shopping once the rush-hour traffic for work has ended.

At noon everyone returns home for lunch. Parents will often collect the children at school so they can be home for the mid-day meal. Although lunch is traditionally the main meal of the day, this custom is changing in large cities where it is common to find the "continuous day" with only a 45-minute break for lunch. In this latter instance, the workday ends earlier. The traditional pattern is still observed by many small businesses and in smaller towns. In the afternoon, people return to work and children go back for an afternoon school session. Schools close for a half-day on Wednesday, but are open for classes on Saturday morning.

On weekends, people usually stay home and do work around the house and/or have large family gatherings with members of their extended family. Some families have country homes to which they travel on weekends.

12. Leisure

While the French enjoy watching certain team sports like soccer, rugby, basketball, volleyball, they are more apt to participate in individual ones such as cycling, windsurfing, mountain climbing, skiing, hiking, jogging, and tennis.

The French enjoy reading newspapers, magazines, and books, and are usually well-informed and up-to-date. There are dozens of different publications in France, targeted for many different audiences. Some sample categories are: sports, religion, politics, literature, fashion, women, *presse du cœur* (romance), youth, etc.

The family vacation is the high point of the year and is usually taken sometime during July or August. Often a mother who is not working will take the children to the country or seaside and the father will join them for the five weeks he legally allowed off from work. While away, the mother may take the children to the beach or river for swimming, or send them to a *colonie de vacances* (vacation resort) where such activities are supervised. Once the father joins the family, however, they act as a unit again and go most places together.

13. Cafés

Cafés are popular throughout France. In the morning, you can get delicious coffee and *croissants*. Most also serve sandwiches and snacks in addition to beverages. There is no age limit for drinking in France, so anyone can go to a *café*. It is important to develop a taste for relaxing in a *café* and talking with friends, since this is an important pastime in France.

14. National Pride

The French are very proud of their country and its national achievements. Their history, which dates from prehistoric times, fires this pride. This attitude has caused them to be somewhat insular in their viewpoints and sometimes a bit unadaptable when traveling abroad; however, their pride is a very important part of the French character and can be appreciated when accepted as part of their culture. The French are also particularly proud of their language. They attach great importance to speaking French correctly, and they tend to point out errors and supply correct forms in a very direct manner.

COUNTRY FACTS

As you become more comfortable living in France, you will find that you will want to know more about the country; for example, how it is organized and governed. This section includes information about the following aspects:

1. History
2. Map
3. Population and Language
4. Government
5. Economy
6. Education
7. Religion
8. Art



1. History

The French are proud of their history and, as a result, France's past remains very much alive today. The earliest inhabitants of France were there a hundred thousand years ago, and some of their prehistoric settlements have been preserved in the *Vézère* valley, in *Font-de-Gaume*, and in *Lascaux*.

The first ethnic group to inhabit France were called Ligurians, and the French people today are of Ligurian origin. Their ancestry also contains Celtic blood, since the Celts (also called Gauls) conquered the Ligurians in the 5th century B.C. In 58 B.C., the Roman conquest of the Gauls began. These wars, known as the Gallic Wars, lasted 10 years, at the end of which Rome took over control of the Gauls and ruled for 500 years. Lyon is the city established by the Romans to be the economic and political capital of Gaul.

Gaul remained relatively peaceful until the beginning of the 5th century A.D., when barbarians from the north invaded. These Germanic tribes lived on friendly terms with the Gauls, once they had set up their own territories. The Franks were one of these tribes, and France was later named after them. The Franks eventually became rulers and, under the leadership of Charlemagne and the emperors who immediately preceded him, the empire was extended to the Baltic Coast, Russia, mid-Italy, and the Pyrenees.

Following Charlemagne's death, no one leader was strong enough to rule the country, and the empire became fragmented. Feudalism was born and continued through the Middle Ages. *Carcassonne* is a walled town built in this period.

France emerged as a nation in the 13th century, being one of the earliest countries to progress from feudalism to being a nation-state. Its monarchs were competent and its armies the most disciplined in Europe. Under the leadership of Louis XIV from 1643 to 1715, France was the leading power in Europe. *Versailles*, originally a hunting lodge, was remodelled to its present grandeur by Louis XIV.

During the 18th century, intellectual development reached its peak, but at the same time the privileges granted to the aristocracy gave rise to discontent among the peasants and middle class. This finally resulted in the French Revolution (1789-94), which established republican and egalitarian principles of government. In spite of the Revolution, France returned to monarchical governments four times, under Napoleon, Louis XVIII, Louis-Philippe, and Napoleon III. After the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the Third Republic was established, and it lasted until the defeat of France by Germany during World War II.

World War II brought great losses to France. After its defeat in 1940, France remained occupied by the Germans until it was liberated by the Allied Forces in 1944. Then, after a short period of provisional government, the Fourth Republic was established under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle. His government was based on a parliamentary form controlled by a series of alliances between different factions. Due to this mixture of factions involved in governing the country, it was impossible to achieve agreement during various international crises confronting France. In particular, decisions had to be made about civil disturbances occurring in Indochina and later in Algeria, areas where France had colonies. It was, in fact, disputes over how to handle Algeria which led to the collapse of the Fourth Republic.

In 1958, de Gaulle rewrote the Constitution strengthening the powers of the president in the hopes that this would guarantee political stability for France. He, himself, was elected the first president of the Fifth Republic under this new Constitution. DeGaulle remained in power for another eleven years until 1969. He was followed by Georges Pompidou, who took over the Gaullist Party. In 1974, when Pompidou died in office, his finance minister, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, won the presidency. He was not a Gaullist himself, but he appointed a Gaullist prime minister.

In 1981, François Mitterand defeated d'Estaing, and Socialist Party candidates took the majority of the parliamentary seats. For the first time, France's government was Socialist. At first, Mitterand experienced high public ratings, but, as economic difficulties increased during the '80's, the polls indicated a change in opinion; his popularity slipped. He was re-elected in 1988 and has remained president, but a political shift away from the Left and toward Right-wing candidates has continued.

In recent years, there has been much discussion about decentralization. The tradition in France has been to centralize the affairs of state through Paris and the offices of the government there. Over the years, there have been attempts to diversify the places of decision-making, to provide wider input into the decision-making process. The events of *mai 1968*, the widespread protests initiated by students, were a motivation to this end. The idea and practice of centralization, however, remains an ingrained cultural tradition among many French people.

Related to his tradition of centralization is a strong sense of French nationalism. Most of the French take pride in the "glory" of French culture and in France's political independence. However, it is said that the French never agree about anything. For example, during World War II, the French government in Vichy collaborated with the Germans, but there was a strong French Resistance (guerrilla movement), and General de Gaulle, at the head of his Free French army, was a very independent member of the Allied Command. After the war, de Gaulle led France to join NATO, but he—and all the French presidents since then—resisted the influence and leadership of the U.S. In 1966, he withdrew France from NATO's integrated military command. France then joined West Germany in establishing *détente* (a peaceful understanding) with the U.S.S.R.

At the same time that this French nationalism was flourishing, France was also leading the movement to a united Europe. Frenchmen Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, along with Belgian Paul Henri Spaak, are considered to be the founders of the historic movement which has led to the present European Community and the 1991 Maastricht Treaty on European Union. The French still disagree with one another on how much military, political, and economic independence France should maintain within the E.C. They voted to ratify the Maastricht Treaty by only 51% on September 20, 1992. This same debate is going on in all the other nations of Europe, but it is particularly intense and politically important in France.

France has also assumed a major role in promoting *La Francophonie*, the promotion of the French language and its many cultural manifestations in countries and people around the world.

2. Maps



Traditional Regions of France



Cities of France

3. Land and People

Regions: France is divided into 21 administrative regions containing 95 departments. In addition, there are 5 overseas departments: Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Réunion, Saint-Pierre, and Miquelon; plus 5 overseas territories: Vanuatu (formerly New Caledonia), French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna Islands, and French Southern and Antarctic Territories; and one special-status territory: Mayotte.

Population: The population of France is about 56 million. It grows at a rate of about .5% per year, one of the lowest rates in the world. 77% of the people live in cities. The population density is 252 people per square mile.

People: The French people are a mixture of various European and Mediterranean ethnic groups. Historically, the Celtic, Latin, Germanic, and Basque peoples have been predominant in different regions of the country. Over the centuries, these peoples have blended so that today only a few distinctions are made based upon the original groups. However, the French are often very proud of their local and regional heritage.

Immigrants: Traditionally, France has had a high level of immigration. The two largest minority groups are South Europeans and North Africans. Other groups are Slavic and Indochinese.

Language: The French language comes historically from the vernacular Latin that was spoken by the Romans in Gaul. Its grammar derives basically from Latin, although it has many Celtic and German words in its vocabulary. (See page 35.)

Geography: France is the largest West European country. Two-thirds of the country is flat plains and gently rolling hills; one-third is mountainous. It covers 555,670 square kilometers (212,668 square miles), and is bordered by Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy to the northeast and east, the Mediterranean Sea and Spain to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the west and northwest, and the English Channel (*La Manche*) to the north. Its major rivers are the *La Seine*, *La Loire*, and *La Garonne* in the west and north and the *La Rhone* in the southeast and also *Le Rhin* in the northeast. Its major mountain ranges are the Alps and Jura in the east and the Pyrenees on the border with Spain. In the south center of the country is a mountainous plateau called the *Massif Central*.

Cities: Paris is the cultural and political capital of France. Other major cities include: Marseilles, the large port city on the Mediterranean founded by the Phoenicians in 600 BC; Bordeaux, center of the *bordelaia* wine region; Lyon, a major commercial and industrial center; Strasbourg, an important port on the Rhine and seat of the Council of Europe; Nice, a popular resort city on the Riviera; Toulouse, *la ville rose*, famous for its many buildings constructed of red brick.

Famous Tourist Attractions: There are many attractions in France, but this list will suggest just a few. First of all, there are the vestiges of the Roman Empire that remain standing (or partly standing) to this day—the ancient aqueduct in *Nîmes*, the arenas in *Nîmes* and *Arles*, the theater and the arch in *Orange*, and other remaining structures throughout the south of France. The medieval era has left traces in the many castles, fortifications, monasteries and cathedrals throughout France—impressive structures such as the cathedral of *Notre Dame* in Paris, of *Chartres* in Chartres, of *Mont Saint Michel* in Normandy. There is also the string of *châteaux* that line the river *Loire*. In many places in France, one can also see the legacies of the many wars that have been waged on French soil over the centuries—the statues in the plazas and parks, the monuments in town squares, and the many cemeteries from the first and second world wars, the blockhouses on the beaches of Normandy. Visitors to the various regions of France also seek out the many museums with treasures of French art and civilization. (See page 33.)

Climate: France's climate is temperate, with the northern half characterized by more extremes of temperature and rainfall than the southern half. The wettest regions are the *Massif Central*, the Jura, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, and the northwest and west coasts around the Cherbourg peninsula, Brittany, and the Landes. The driest regions are the Paris basin and the Mediterranean coast.



4. Government

France is a republic governed by a president and a parliament composed of two houses, the Senate and the National Assembly. The National Assembly is the principal legislative body, and its members are elected directly by the people for a five-year term. All seats are voted upon in each election. Members of the Senate are chosen by an electoral college for a nine-year term. One third of the Senate is renewed every three years. The Senate's legislative powers are limited, since the National Assembly makes the final decision in the event that there is disagreement between the two houses.

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic gives the president of the Republic certain powers over the Parliament: the president chooses the prime minister, presides over the Cabinet, commands the armed forces, and concludes treaties. He or she may also submit questions to a national referendum and can dissolve the National Assembly. In certain emergency situations, the president may assume full powers. He or she is therefore the dominant element in the constitutional system. However, the National Assembly can force the dissolution of the government and call new elections if an absolute majority of the Assembly votes a censure motion.

The major political parties in France are the Socialist, Gaullist, and Communist parties, and a number of smaller parties referred to collectively as the Center parties: Independents, Moderates, Peasants, and Republicans.

In the past, decisions have usually been made by the central government, which has also appointed the heads of each department. In 1982, however, the national government passed laws to decentralize authority by giving many administrative and fiscal powers to locally elected officials.

Although the French government is politically independent, its policies are increasingly determined and limited by the European Community. Under the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, the twelve member nations must coordinate and then integrate their economies and many of their social policies. They are to have a common currency and common defence and foreign policies. There are to be no traditional borders to effect the free movement of people or capital. In all European nations, the power of the European Council of Ministers, Commissions

of the European Communities, European Parliament, and European Court of Justice is increasing relative to the power of the national governments.

5. Economy

The economy in France is growing and modernizing. It is, in fact, one of the world's leaders in industry and agriculture. It has large agricultural resources and a highly skilled labor force. The industrial enterprises are diversified and modern.

In 1981, following the election of Socialist François Mitterand as president and a socialist majority to Parliament, a major change in economic orientation was initiated. Many large manufacturing firms were nationalized, as were most of the commercial banks. Initially, the changes stimulated growth. The policies were designed to redistribute income and increase government spending, while controlling unemployment. However, since the policies differed considerably from those of France's partners in international trade, a resulting increase in import demand was not met by an equal increase in exports. By 1983, a growing trade deficit and inflation rate were straining the currency, and the *franc* finally had to be devalued. The present government policies are now designed to stabilize the economy, with reductions in the budget deficit, cuts on spending, increases in taxes, and tighter monetary and credit policies.

The most important areas of industrial production in France are: steel and related products, aluminum, chemicals, mechanical and electrical goods. The country has been successful in developing dynamic telecommunications, aerospace, and weapons sectors.

France is a leading agricultural producer in Western Europe for a number of reasons: a temperate climate, large amounts of fertile land, use of modern technology in farming, and government subsidies. Major exports are dairy products, meat, wine, barley, and wheat. Though most land is devoted to pasture and grain, much of the country's best land is used to produce wine grapes.

In the 1990's, the economic policies of the French government are no longer fully independent. The French have their own economic and political agendas, but they must make their economic plans according to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (G.A.T.T.) and coordinate them with the trade, industrial, agricultural, and fiscal policies of the Common Market of the European Community (E.C.).

6. Education



France is proud of its government-controlled educational system, which is particularly excellent at primary and secondary levels. It is highly competitive and free of charge from kindergarten through the graduate level.

Children begin school at the end of their second year, when they enter *école maternelle* (nursery school) for three years of non-compulsory pre-primary education. The emphasis at this time is upon physical and sensory exercises, and on language development and observation skills. Compulsory education begins with primary school at the end of the child's fifth year and continues for five years. At this point, the "secondary stage" of education officially begins.

Secondary education is divided into two cycles, a first and a second. Early in the first cycle, children are divided into those who will probably continue secondary school until the end of the second cycle and those who will not. The former group will continue until they are eighteen years of age; the latter will receive a "terminal" degree and leave secondary school at the age of sixteen. For those completing the second cycle, there is an examination called the *baccalauréat* which must be passed in order to go on to higher education.

In higher education, there are two types of schools. One is the university, to which passing the *baccalauréat* guarantees admission. The other is what is known as a *grande école*. Competition for entrance into a *grande école* is strong, and often requires two years of preparation. These schools specialize in a variety of subjects: literary, scientific, administrative. Some of the more prestigious ones are: *École Normale Supérieure*, *École Polytechnique*, *École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)*. These schools are all located in Paris.

7. Religion

The majority of French people are baptized Roman Catholics, but only one in five is active in the church. After childhood, the majority may have contact with their church only at their marriage ceremony, the baptism of their children, and the funerals of family and friends. The most active Catholic areas of France are Brittany in the west, Alsace in the east, and the southern area of the *Massif Central*.

There are also six Protestant churches; they make up the *Fédération Protestante de France*. Of these, three are Reformed Churches, two are Lutheran, and one is Baptist. The highest proportion of Protestants are in the *Bas-Rhin* department in Alsace and in the *Gard* department in the south.

Islam and Judaism are the principal minority religions. The Jewish community is one of the most active in Western Europe, with most members residing in Paris, Marseilles and Alsace.



8. Art

Music: France's greatest contemporary composer-conductor, Pierre Boulez, has helped make Paris one of the world's liveliest centers for contemporary music. He took over responsibility for a new experimental music center in the Pompidou/Beaubourg arts complex in 1977 and it is here where most activities occur.

During the first part of the 20th Century, two popular music stars, Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier, became so well loved that they were accepted as symbols of French culture, of the French spirit, not only in France but all around the world. Since their deaths, there have been many great popular French singers, but none has gained the international recognition of Piaf or Chevalier. Nevertheless there are many good cabaret and jazz artists and pop and rock groups in France today.

Painting: The modern art of painting was first developed in Italy and Flanders and not in France; however, during the past three hundred years France (particularly Paris) has very often been at the creative forefront as styles of painting have developed, and famous painters from all over the world have spent part of their careers living and working there. Many well-known works can be found in French museums. When you are in Paris you should be sure to spend some time at the *Louvre*, the world's largest royal palace, where one of the largest art collections is housed. Other museums worthy of your time include:

Musée d'Orsay, a museum with a wonderful collection of Impressionist paintings.

Musée National d'Art Moderne, which contains contemporary painting and sculpture.

Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, which has permanent exhibits of works by 20th Century artists and organizes special exhibits twice a year.

Sculpture: One of the most well-known 19th century sculptors was Auguste Rodin, a master of the realist tradition. Some of his works can be seen at the *Musée Rodin* in Paris. In the 19th and 20th Century museums mentioned above, there are more Rodins and works by other French sculptors like Antoine Boudelle, Aristide Maillol, and Charles Despiau, as well as work by non-French sculptors who worked in France.

Literature: France is justly proud of its literary tradition which includes many of the greatest writers and philosophers in history. Some of the most renowned French authors are: Rabelais, Mme. de Staël, Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal, Molière, Racine, Voltaire, Rousseau, Stendhal, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Balzac, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, André Gide, Colette, Proust, Rimbaud, Rostand, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir.

Film: The French enjoy watching films from many countries, but they also have a thriving cinema industry of their own. The French place special value on film directors, believing that they are the key artists in cinema. Going to see the latest film directed by Jean-Luc Godard, or to a festival of films by François Truffaut, is just as common as going to see films starring famous actors and actresses such as Gérard Philipe and Catherine Deneuve.

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

More than 90,000,000 people speak French as their mother tongue. It is an official language of Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Haiti, and a number of countries in West and Central Africa, and also of the United Nations. In fact, French is so widely spoken that it is considered an international language. Despite some variation in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, French-speakers from different regions can usually understand each other.

French belongs to the Romance family of languages—along with Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and several others. These languages all have their origin in ancient Latin. French began with the conquest of Gaul (France) by the Romans around 50 B.C., when the Gauls gradually began to use the informal Latin of the Roman soldiers. This language changed with the invasion of the Franks about 400 A.D. and again with the later invasion of the Danish Vikings (Normans) around 800 A.D. French first appeared in written form during the 9th century. As it developed, French had two major dialects, North and South. Because of the political influence of Paris, the dialect spoken there in the North became the accepted form throughout France. In the 17th century, the structure of French began to be standardized through the efforts of writers and scholars. It was during this period that the French Academy (*L'Académie Française*) was founded by Cardinal Richelieu; one of its tasks was to develop a standard dictionary of the French language. Modern French has been somewhat influenced by other languages like English (at least since 1066), Modern Italian and Spanish, and Greek. Like all living languages, particularly international ones, French continues to grow and evolve.

The use and the richness of the French language have expanded over the last four hundred years as the French colonial empire expanded into North, West, and Central Africa, into Southeast Asia, to the South Pacific, to North and South America, and to the Caribbean. In France, *L'Académie Française* has tried with some success to maintain the integrity of their language, but inevitably both the French language and culture have evolved as the French traded with peoples all around the world. Today the era of colonialism is past, but many former French colonies, now independent countries, have retained French, their French, as an official language.

1. Some Basic Grammar

Following is a brief outline of the essential features of French.

Articles

Nouns in French are either masculine or feminine. Articles agree in gender and number with the noun.

1. Definite article (the): *le, la, les*

	singular		plural	
masculine	<i>le garçon</i>	the boy	<i>les garçons</i>	the boys
feminine	<i>la maison</i>	the house	<i>les maisons</i>	the houses

2. Indefinite article (a/an): *un, une, des*

masculine	<i>voyage</i>	a trip	<i>des voyages</i>	(some) trips
feminine	<i>une lettre</i>	a letter	<i>des lettres</i>	(some) letters

Nouns

1. Nouns are generally made plural by adding *s*

	singular		plural	
after consonants	<i>garçon</i>	boy	<i>garçons</i>	the boys
after vowels	<i>lettre</i>	letter	<i>lettres</i>	letters

There are exceptions,

<i>cadeau</i>	gift	<i>cadeaux</i>	gifts
<i>journal</i>	newspaper	<i>journaux</i>	newspapers

2. To show possession, use the preposition *de* (of).

<i>la porte de la maison</i>	the door of the house
<i>la valise de Jean</i>	Jean's briefcase
<i>la chemise du* garçon</i>	the boy's shirt
<i>les maisons des** hommes</i>	the mens' houses
<i>les chaussures des** enfants</i>	the children's shoes

**du* is the contraction of *de & le*

***des* is the contraction of *de & les*

Adjectives

1. Adjectives agree with the nouns they describe in gender and number.

	singular		plural
masculine	<i>petit</i>	small, little	<i>petits</i>
feminine	<i>petite</i>		<i>petites</i>
masculine	<i>long</i>	long	<i>longs</i>
feminine	<i>longue</i>		<i>longues</i>

Most adjectives form their plurals, as do most nouns, by adding *s*.

2. As a rule, the adjective follows the noun.

une lettre formelle

but not always

un petit garçon

3. Possessive adjectives.

	singular	plural
my	<i>mon/ma</i>	<i>mes</i>
your	<i>ton/ta</i>	<i>tes</i>
his/her/its	<i>son/sa</i>	<i>ses</i>
our	<i>notre</i>	<i>nos</i>
your	<i>votre</i>	<i>vos</i>
their	<i>leur</i>	<i>leurs</i>

Possessive adjectives agree with the thing possessed, not with the possessor. For example:

	singular	
masculine	<i>son livre</i>	<i>his or her book</i>
feminine	<i>sa chambre</i>	<i>his or her room</i>
	plural	
masculine	<i>ses livres</i>	<i>his or her books</i>
feminine	<i>ses chambres</i>	<i>his or her rooms</i>

4. Comparative and superlative are formed by adding *plus* (more) or *moins* (less) and *la/le plus* (the most) and *la/le moins* (the least).

<i>belle</i>	beautiful
<i>plus belle</i>	more beautiful
<i>la plus belle</i>	the most beautiful
<i>moins belle</i>	less beautiful
<i>la moins belle</i>	the least beautiful

Adverbs

Adverbs generally are formed by adding *-ment* to the feminine form of the adjective.

Masculine	Feminine		adverb	
<i>lent</i>	<i>lente</i>	slow	<i>lentement</i>	slowly
<i>doux</i>	<i>douce</i>	soft	<i>doucement</i>	softly
<i>heureux</i>	<i>heureuse</i>	happy	<i>heureusement</i>	happily

There are exceptions.

<i>bon</i>	<i>bonne</i>	good	<i>bien</i>	well
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Adjectives are sometimes used as adverbs, e.g., *fort* can mean strong or strongly, *vite* can mean quick or quickly.



Pronouns

1. Possessive pronouns.

	singular	plural
mine	<i>le mien/la mienne</i>	<i>les miens/les miennes</i>
yours	<i>le tien/la tienne</i>	<i>les tiens/les tiennes</i>
his/hers/its	<i>le sien/la sienne</i>	<i>les siens/les siennes</i>
ours	<i>le/la nôtre</i>	<i>les nôtres</i>
yours	<i>le/la vôtre</i>	<i>les vôtres</i>
theirs	<i>le/la leur</i>	<i>les leurs</i>

Possessive pronouns agree with the thing possessed, not with the possessor. For example,

singular

masculine	<i>Le livre est le mien.</i> The book is mine.
feminine	<i>La chambre est la mienne.</i> The room is mine.

plural

masculine	<i>Les livres sont les miens.</i> The books are mine.
feminine	<i>Les chambres sont les miennes.</i> The rooms are mine.

2. Demonstrative pronouns.

	masculine	feminine
this	<i>celui-ci</i>	<i>celle-ci</i>
these	<i>ceux-ci</i>	<i>celles-ci</i>
that	<i>celui-là</i>	<i>celle-là</i>
those	<i>ceux-là</i>	<i>celles-là</i>

Ceux-là sont ses livres.
Elle aime celui-ci.

Those are his/her books.
She likes this one.

3. Personal Pronouns

	subject	direct object	indirect object
I	<i>je</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>
you (fam.)	<i>tu</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>te</i>
you (pol.)	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>
he	<i>il</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>lui</i>
she	<i>elle</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>lui</i>
it	<i>il/elle</i>	<i>le/la</i>	<i>lui</i>
we	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>	<i>nous</i>
you	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>vous</i>
they	<i>ils/elles</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>leur</i>

Elle vous la donne.

She gives it to you.



Verbs

1. There are two important auxiliary verbs:

être (to be)

je suis (I am)

tu es (you are)

vous êtes (you are)

il/elle est (s/he is)

nous sommes (we are)

vous êtes (you are)

ils/elles sont (they are)

avoir (to have)

j'ai (I have)

tu as (you have)

vous avez (you have)

il/elle a (s/he has)

nous avons (we have)

vous avez (you have)

ils/elles ont (they have)

2. And three main categories of **regular verbs**:

Infinitive:	ends in -er	ends in -ir	ends in -re
	parler to speak	finir to finish	vendre to sell
<i>je</i>	<i>parle</i>	<i>finis</i>	<i>vends</i>
<i>tu</i>	<i>parles</i>	<i>finis</i>	<i>vends</i>
<i>il/elle</i>	<i>parle</i>	<i>finit</i>	<i>vend</i>
<i>nous</i>	<i>parlons</i>	<i>finissons</i>	<i>vendons</i>
<i>vous</i>	<i>parlez</i>	<i>finissez</i>	<i>vendez</i>
<i>ils/elles</i>	<i>parlent</i>	<i>finissent</i>	<i>vendent</i>

3. **Irregular verbs**: As in many languages, exceptions have to be learned separately. The following are four common irregular verbs:

	pouvoir to be able to, can	aller to go	voir to see	connaître to know [a person]
<i>je</i>	<i>peux</i>	<i>vais</i>	<i>vois</i>	<i>connais</i>
<i>tu</i>	<i>peux</i>	<i>vas</i>	<i>vois</i>	<i>connais</i>
<i>il/elle</i>	<i>peut</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>voit</i>	<i>connait</i>
<i>nous</i>	<i>pouvons</i>	<i>allons</i>	<i>voyons</i>	<i>connaissons</i>
<i>vous</i>	<i>pouvez</i>	<i>allez</i>	<i>voyez</i>	<i>connaissez</i>
<i>ils/elles</i>	<i>peuvent</i>	<i>vont</i>	<i>voient</i>	<i>connaissent</i>

Negatives

Form the negative by placing **ne** before the verb (or auxiliary) and **pas** after it.

C'est difficile. It's difficult.
Ce n'est pas difficile. It's not difficult.

Questions

Form questions by changing the intonation of your voice, raising the last word, or by using the question marker *Est-ce que*.

<i>Vous parlez français.</i>	You speak French.
<i>Vous parlez français?</i>	Do you speak French?
<i>Est-ce que vous parlez français?</i>	Do you speak French?
<i>Il est au restaurant.</i>	He's at the restaurant.
<i>Il est au restaurant?</i>	Is he at the restaurant?
<i>Est-ce qu'il est au restaurant?</i>	Is he at the restaurant?
<i>Vous vendez des fleurs.</i>	You sell flowers.
<i>Vous vendez des fleurs?</i>	Do you sell flowers?
<i>Est-ce que vous vendez des fleurs?</i>	Do you sell flowers?

Question Words

<i>qui?</i>	who?
<i>quoi?</i>	what?
<i>pourquoi?</i>	why?
<i>quand?</i>	when?
<i>où?</i>	where?
<i>d'où?</i>	where from?
<i>jusqu'où</i>	where to?
<i>comment?</i>	how?
<i>combien?</i>	how much?/how many?

Pourquoi est-ce que vous vendez des fleurs?

Why do you sell flowers?

Où est-ce que vous vendez des fleurs?

Where do you sell flowers?

Quand est-ce que vous vendez des fleurs?

When do you sell flowers?

Can...?

Can I have ...?/

Pouvez-vous me donner ...?

Can you give me ...?

Pouvez-vous nous donner ...?

Can we have ...?

Pouvez-vous me montrer ...?

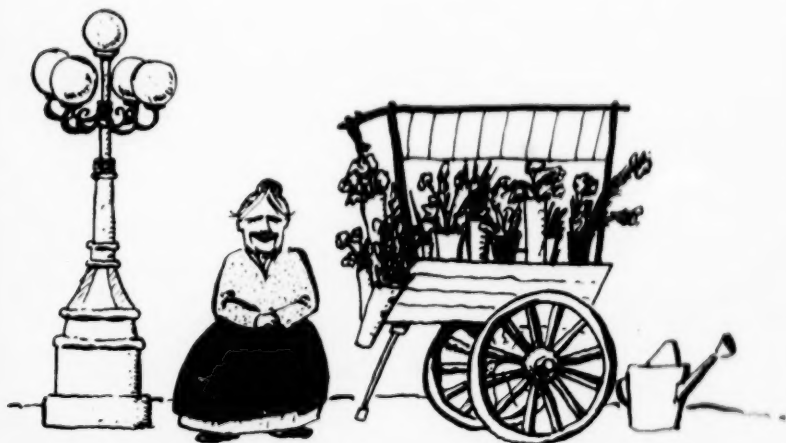
Can you show me ...?

Pouvez-vous me dire ...?

Can you tell me ...?

Can you help me, please?

Pouvez-vous m'aider, s'il vous plaît?



Wanting

I'd like ...

Je voudrais ...

We'd like ...

Nous voudrions ...

Please give me ...

S'il vous plaît, donnez-moi ...

Please bring me ...

S'il vous plaît, apportez-moi ...

I'm hungry.

J'ai faim.

I'm thirsty.

J'ai soif.

I'm tired.

Je suis fatigué(e).

I'm lost.

Je suis perdu(e).

It's important.

C'est important.

It's urgent!

C'est urgent!

Hurry up!

Dépêchez-vous!

It is ... / There is ...

It is ...	<i>C'est ...</i>
Is it ...?	<i>Est-ce que ...?</i>
It isn't ...	<i>Ce n'est pas ...</i>
There is ... / There are ...	<i>Il y a ...</i>
Is there ... / Are there ...?	<i>Il y a ...?</i>
There is no ...	<i>Il n'y a pas ...</i>
There are no ...	<i>Il n'y a pas ...</i>

Prepositions and other words

behind	<i>derrière</i>	inside	<i>dedans</i>
to	<i>à</i>	outside	<i>dehors</i>
for	<i>pour</i>	down	<i>en bas</i>
until	<i>jusqu'à</i>	up	<i>en haut</i>
towards	<i>vers</i>	above	<i>au-dessous</i>
since	<i>depuis</i>	along	
through	<i>par à travers</i>	between	<i>entre</i>
at	<i>à</i>	on	<i>sur</i>
in	<i>dans / dedans</i>	under	<i>sous</i>
during	<i>pendant</i>	none	<i>aucun</i>
with	<i>avec</i>	and	<i>et</i>
without	<i>sans</i>	or	<i>ou</i>
before	<i>avant</i>	also	<i>aussi</i>
after	<i>après</i>	perhaps	<i>peut-être</i>
soon	<i>bientôt</i>	not	<i>ne ... pas</i>
already	<i>déjà</i>	nothing	<i>rien</i>
then	<i>puis</i>	nobody	<i>personne</i>
again	<i>encore</i>	now	<i>maintenant</i>
there	<i>là</i>	immediately	<i>toute de suite</i>
here	<i>ici</i>	gladly	<i>avec plaisir</i>



Some common words

cheap / expensive

good / bad

better / worse

true / false

light / heavy

easy / difficult

full / empty

vacant / occupied

open / shut

old / young

old / new

big / small

quick / slow

beautiful / ugly

warm / cold

never / always

early / late

near / far

left / right

yes / no

moins cher / cher

bon / mauvais

meilleur / pire

vrai / faux

léger / lourd

facile / difficile

plein / vide

libre / occupé

ouvert / fermé

agé / jeune

ancien / neuf

grand / petit

vite / lent

beau / laid

chaud / froid

jamais / toujours

tôt / tard

près / loin

gauche / droite

oui / non

Quantities

a little / a lot	un peu / beaucoup
much / many	beaucoup / beaucoup
more than / less than	plus que / moins que
enough / too	assez / trop
some	de la / du / des
any	de la / du / des

Numbers

Cardinal

1 <i>un, une</i>	19 <i>dix-neuf</i>
2 <i>deux</i>	20 <i>vingt</i>
3 <i>trois</i>	21 <i>vingt et un</i>
4 <i>quatre</i>	22 <i>vingt-deux</i>
5 <i>cinq</i>	30 <i>trente</i>
6 <i>six</i>	40 <i>quarante</i>
7 <i>sept</i>	50 <i>cinquante</i>
8 <i>huit</i>	60 <i>soixante</i>
9 <i>neuf</i>	70 <i>soixante-dix</i>
10 <i>dix</i>	71 <i>soixante-onze</i>
11 <i>onze</i>	80 <i>quatre-vingt</i>
12 <i>douze</i>	90 <i>quatre-vingt-dix</i>
13 <i>treize</i>	91 <i>quatre-vingt-onze</i>
14 <i>quatorze</i>	100 <i>cent</i>
15 <i>quinze</i>	101 <i>cent et un</i>
16 <i>seize</i>	120 <i>cent-deux</i>
17 <i>dix-sept</i>	1000 <i>mille</i>
18 <i>dix-huit</i>	



AVIGNON

Ordinal

1st	<i>premier, première, 1^{er}</i>	18th	<i>dix-huitième</i>
2nd	<i>deuxième, 2^e</i>	19th	<i>dix-neuvième</i>
3rd	<i>troisième</i>	20th	<i>vingtième</i>
4th	<i>quatrième</i>	21st	<i>vingtième</i>
5th	<i>cinquième</i>	30th	<i>trentième</i>
6th	<i>sixième</i>	40th	<i>quarantième</i>
7th	<i>septième</i>	50th	<i>cinquantième</i>
8th	<i>huitième</i>	60th	<i>soixantième</i>
9th	<i>neuvième</i>	70th	<i>soixante-dixième</i>
10th	<i>dixième</i>	71st	<i>soixante-onzième</i>
11th	<i>onzième</i>	80th	<i>quatre-vingtième</i>
12th	<i>douzième</i>	90th	<i>quatre-vingt-dixième</i>
13th	<i>treizième</i>	91st	<i>quatre-vingt-onzième</i>
14th	<i>quatorzième</i>	100th	<i>centième</i>
15th	<i>quinzième</i>	101st	<i>cent et uneième</i>
16th	<i>seizième</i>	1000	<i>millième</i>
17th	<i>dix-septième</i>		

2. Useful French Phrases

Greetings

Good morning	<i>Bonjour.</i>
Good afternoon	<i>Bonjour</i>
Good evening	<i>Bon soir.</i>
Good night	<i>Bonne nuit.</i>

Approaching Someone

Excuse me.	<i>Excusez-moi.</i>
• Sir	<i>Monsieur</i>
• Ma'am	<i>Madame</i>
• Miss	<i>Mademoiselle</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Parlez-vous anglais?</i>
Do you understand English?	<i>Est-ce que vous comprenez l'anglais?</i>
Yes/No.	<i>Oui/Non.</i>
I'm sorry.	<i>Je suis désolé.</i>
I don't speak French.	<i>Je ne parle pas français.</i>
I don't understand.	<i>Je ne comprends pas.</i>
I understand a little.	<i>Je comprends un peu.</i>
I speak very little French.	<i>Je parle très peu de français.</i>
Please speak slowly.	<i>Parlez lentement, s'il vous plaît.</i>
Please repeat.	<i>Répétez, s'il vous plaît.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Merci.</i>

Asking for Help

Excuse me.	<i>Excusez-moi.</i>
May I ask a question?	<i>Une question, s'il vous plaît?</i>
Could you please help me?	<i>Pourriez-vous m'aider?</i>

Identifying Yourself

I'm a tourist.	<i>Je suis touriste.</i>
We're tourists.	<i>Nous sommes touristes.</i>
I'm not from here.	<i>Je ne suis pas d'ici.</i>
I'm from the United States.	<i>Je suis des Etats-Unis.</i>
I'm from New York.	<i>Je suis de New York.</i>
• Philadelphia	<i>Philadelphie</i>
• Chicago	<i>Chicago</i>
• California	<i>Californie</i>
I'm American.	<i>Je suis américain(e).</i>
We're Americans.	<i>Nous sommes américains(es).</i>

Asking for Information

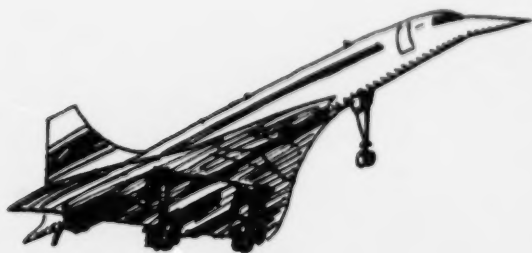
What time is it, please?	<i>Quelle heure est-il, s'il vous plaît?</i>
Where is the men's / ladies' room?	<i>Où sont les toilettes?</i>
Where is a subway station?	<i>Où est le métro?</i>
Where is the police station?	<i>Où est le commissariat?</i>
Where is the post office?	<i>Où est la poste?</i>
Where is a mail box?	<i>Où est la boîte à lettres?</i>
Where is a good restaurant?	<i>Où est un bon restaurant?</i>
How much does this cost?	<i>C'est com bien?</i>
How do you say "Please" in French?	<i>Comment dit-on "please" en français?</i>

Politeness/Courtesy

Please.	<i>S'il vous plaît.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Merci.</i>
You're welcome.	<i>De rien.</i>
Sorry (excuse me.)	<i>Pardon.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Excusez-moi.</i>
Good appetite.	<i>Bon appetit.</i>
It doesn't matter	<i>Ça ne fait rien.</i>

Leave-taking

See you soon.	<i>A bientôt.</i>
So long.	<i>Salut.</i>
See you later.	<i>A toute à l'heure.</i>
See you later.	<i>A plus tard.</i>
See you tomorrow.	<i>A demain.</i>
Good-bye/Bye.	<i>Au revoir.</i>



SOME BOOKS ABOUT FRANCE

Culture Capsules: USA-France, World Culture Series, by Dr. J. Dale Miller and Maurice Loiseau. Salt Lake City, Utah: Culture Contrasts Company, 1974.

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Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans by Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1990.

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